

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /070 W
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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4030
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 1609

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN, PA
SUBJ: BANGLADESH REACTION TO INDIAN AND PAKISTANI ELECTIONS

1. ELECTIONS IN A NEIGHBORING COUNTRY AND IN A COUNTRY WITH WHICH BANGLADESH WAS ONCE LINKED HAVE ATTRACTED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION HERE. THE PRESS HAS LARGELY LIMITED ITSELF TO REPORTING FROM WIRE SERVICES AND THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE EDITORIAL COMMENT ON EITHER ELECTION OR ITS AFTERMATH. THIS, ACCORDING TO ONE EDITOR, WAS AT THE BEHEST OF THE BDG. HOWEVER, DISCUSSION AND COMMENT HAS BEEN FREQUENT IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION.

2. ONE REACTION CAN BE SUMMED UP IN THE REMARK OF A LEADING OBSERVER THAT BHUTTO CHEATS AND WINS WHILE INDIRA DOES NOT CHEAT AND LOSES. THE RIGGING OF THE PAKISTAN ELECTION IS AS WIDELY BELIEVED HERE AS IT IS IN PNA CIRCLES IN PAKISTAN, TO THE EXTENT THAT TWO OFFICERS OF THE PAKISTAN EMBASSY SAID SEPARATELY THAT THE ELECTION WAS UNFAIR. TO MANY BANGLADESHIS OF THE "ELITE" WHO DID NOT FAVOR
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SEPARATION FROM PAKISTAN (BUT WHO ACCEPT IT NOW), BHUTTO'S ALLEGED ACTION WAS "UNDERSTANDABLE". THEY CHARGE HIM WITH BEING SO COVETOUS OF POWER IN 1971 THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO SPLIT PAKISTAN. NOW, THEY SAY, HE IS WILLING TO RIG ELECTIONS TO STAY IN POWER.

3. THE BRINGING IN TO THE CAMPAIGN OF GENERAL NIAZI BY THE

PNA WAS REPORTED WIDELY IN THE BANGLA PRESS. MOST BANGLADESHIS WERE UNHAPPY THAT THE 1971 EVENTS WERE BROUGHT UP AT ALL.

4. PREDICTIONS BY BANGLADESHIS AT THIS DISTANCE AND WITH THE HINDSIGHT OF EARLIER PERIODS IN PAKISTAN'S HISTORY ARE THAT THE ARMY WILL AGAIN STEP INTO A GOVERNING ROLE. HOWEVER, WHETHER BHUTTO REMAINS OR THE ARMY COMES, BANGLADESHIS SEE LITTLE CHANGE IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN OVER THE NEAR TERM. THEY EXPECT TIES TO CONTINUE TO GROZ AND FORESEE THAT IN MANY INTERNATIONAL ISSUES THERE WILL BE A COMMUNITY OF INTERESTS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO INDIA.

5. WHILE THE ELECTION IN PAKISTAN TENDS TO GET MORE NOSTALGIC INTEREST, THAT IN INDIA IS SEEN TO HAVE MORE URGENT IMPLICATIONS FOR BANGLADESH. SEVERAL MATTERS CONCERN PEOPLE HERE, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THE POSSIBILITY OF INSTABILITY IN WEST BENGAL. THE CPM RISE IN THAT STATE IS SEEN AS A POTENTIAL DANGER AND THE POSSIBLE RESULTS OF A FUTURE STATE ELECTION THERE ARE DISCUSSED. OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT RAY HAD INFLUENCE IN ENDING THE ACTIVITIES OF "SEMMBREANTS" FROM WEST BENGAL BASES AND THAT, ON THE OTHER HAND, GHOSH AND THE "SANYAYITES" FAVORED MORE ACTIVITY.

6. THE EXERCISE OF DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS BY INDIANS IN THE ELECTION AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE RESULT BY MRS. GANDHI HAS BEEN GREATLY ADMIRERD AND HAS STIMULATED DEMANDS HERE BY
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POLITICAL LEADERS AND OTHERS FOR REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. WHILE MANY HAD ACCEPTED AND EVEN WELCOMED ZIA'S POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS LAST NOVEMBER, THE EXPERIENCE OF INDIA HAS BROUGHT STATEMENTS BY LEADERS OF A WIDE RANGE OF PARTIES CALLING FOR ELECTIONS AND THESE HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED BY A LARGE SEGMENT OF THE "INTELLIGENTSIA". MANY HOPED FOR SOME ANNOUNCEMENT ON INDEPENDENCE DAY, MARCH 26, BUT WERE DISAPPOINTED.

7. MOST BANGLADESHIS SEE LITTLE CHANGE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND INDIA AS A RESULT OF THE DEFEAT OF THE CONGRESS AND THE FORMATION OF A JANATA-CFD GOVERNMENT. MORARJI IS SEEN AS A SHORT TERM PRIME MINISTER. HE IS CHARACTERIZED AS "ANTI-MUSLIM" BUT ALSO AS A PRAGMATIST AND "ONE WITH WHOM WE CAN WORK". THE ASSIGNMENT OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS PROTFOILIO TO VAJPAYEE WAS A SURPRISE AND HIS JANA SANGH BACKGROUND IS VIEWED WITH SOME MISGIVINGS. BANGLADESHIS FELT THEY HAD DEVELOPED A PERSONAL EQUATION WITH JAGJIVAN RAM IN THE FARAKKA NEGOTIATIONS. PRAKASH SINGH

BADAL IS AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY AND IF HE ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY (AS DID JAGJIVAN) FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS OFFICIALS FEEL THEY WILL HAVE TO WORK HARD TO ACQUAINT HIM WITH THE ISSUES. ON THE BORDER QUESTION THERE IS SOME HOPE THAT INDIAN ASSISTANCE TO "MISCREANTS" WILL CEASE OR AT LEAST DECREASE AND JAGJIVAN'S ENTRY TO THE DEFENSE MINISTRY IS LOOKED ON WITH FAVOR AS IS SANJAY'S DEPARTURE FROM HIS POLITICAL ROLE.

8. SEVERAL ACADEMIC AND INTERESTED BANGLADESHIS HAVE MENTIONED THE NORTH-SOUTH SPLIT IN THE VOTING AND HAVE RECALLED THE EAST-WEST SPLIT IN THE PAKISTAN VOTE OF 1970 ALTHOUGH NOTING THE SPLIT IS NOT AS COMPLETE AND THAT THE GEOGRAPHIC SEPARATION OF THE TWO AREAS DOES NOT EXIST.

9. IN SUM, BANGLADESHIS APPEAR TO LOOK AT PAKISTAN WITH A "WHAT ELSE DID YOU EXPECT OF BHUTTO" VIEW AND AT INDIA WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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A BIT OF ENVY THAT ELECTORAL PROCESSES ARE NOT YET IN VOGUE HERE.
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